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ABSTRACT

An institute was offered at Rockhurst College to give high school and college educators an intense and extensive contact with cinema in all of its aspects--filmmaking, thematic analysis, use in curriculum, Hollywood production, direction, independent filmmakers, library usage, script-writing, booking, programming, and the actual viewing of short and feature length films. Fifty-eight high school and college educators who had little or no experience with film study participated. Twenty-four feature films and over sixty short films were screened, and lectures were given by guests from all over the country. Four courses were offered: Marshall McLuhan and communications media in general, filmmaking classes and the problem of censorship; the relation between film and literature as well as the college teaching of cinema-critique courses; and the relationship of cinema to ethics, cultural values, television advertising, and revolution. Each participant also took part in the creation and execution of an amateur film and developed his own plan and program for implementing film education at his school or college. (JY)

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ROCKHURST COLLEGE

FILM INSTITUTE

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assiatant director: Mr. John F. Kavanaugh S.J.

An Institute on Literacy in the Language of Film

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A REPORT ON GRANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Backround

In the past few years it had become increasingly evident that film and the motion picture industry had a great deal to offer the country in terms of humanistic education. At the same time it was necessary to admit that film's vast potentiality was surpassed only by formal education's seeming incapacity to deal with it in any organized fashion or to benefit from its immense power. This seemed to be especially the case with respect to the middle-western section of the United States.

With this in mind, a proposal was offered to the National Endowment for the Humanities. An institute would be offered at Rockhurst College for the purpose of saturating high-school and college educators with film-experience. The hope was to provide an intense but extensive contact with cinema in all of its aspects -- film-making, thematic analysis, usage in curricula, hollywood production, direction, independent film-makers, library usage, script-writing, booking, programming, and the actual viewing of short and feature-length films.

The target group agreed upon was high-school and college teachers and administrators from the mid-west (Missouri and the eight contiguous states) who had <u>little or no experience</u> with film-education. This was somewhat (although not seriously) modified by the nature of the actual grant received. Since travel and housing costs could not be paid by the endowment grant, approximately half the participant enrollment was from the immediate Kansas City area. Nonetheless, in the 58 participants selected, 29 cities in 9 states were represented as well as 30 high schools and twenty colleges. Twenty of the participants were also in some form of administrative office. The number of students which will be ultimately reached (as well as adults through continuing education) by those attending is, needless to say, considerable.

Project Activities

The emphasis of the Institute was placed upon the viewing and evaluating (and, upon the reception of a $750.00 grant from the Missouri Council on the Arts, on film-making. Thus on every day of the three weeks, including week-ends, there was at least one major film presentation with some informal and formal discussion. Twenty-four feature films were screened (including films from 1925 to 1970 and from every major film-producing country), four of which were directed by Federico Fellini who was the subject of more extended study during the second week of the program. Over sixty short films were shown, fifty-one of which were rental-free from the Kansas City Public Library. (As mentioned in the financial reports, four of the library films were stolen, among others, during the third week.)

As an aid in understanding cinema and the motion picture industry, lectures were given by guests from all over the country: Sidney Lumet (New York), director of over ten major films; John Walsh S.J. (St. Louis), director of television and drama, Fellini expert; Robert Altman (Houston -- tele-lecture), director of this year's Cannes Film Festival Grand Prix Winner, M*A.S.H.; Rev. Patrick Sullivan S.J. (New York) President of the National Catholic Office of Motion Pictures; Dennis McGuire (Hollywood-New York), writer of screenplays, including End of the Road; and Benjamen Hilbert S.J. (Milwaukee), independent film-maker.

Special courses were offered by the four faculty members from two until four every afternoon. There were four separate courses that the participants could select for the first week; these same courses were offered as a second cycle during the second week, thereby keeping the afternoon class sessions to small groups (15 members or under). The four faculty members concentrated on different areas in their "courses" as well as in their major lectures to the entire group during the evenings of the second and third weeks: Sister Bede Sullivan's specialty was Marshall McLuhan and communications media in general; Father Vezeau's concentration was in film-making classes and the problem of censorship;

Father Lakas's special area was the relation between film and literature as well as the college teaching of cinema-critique courses; Mr. Kavanaugh's orientation was more philosophical, relating cinema to ethics, cultural values, television advertising, and revolution.

Halfway through the Institute, the second major emphasis was stressed -- that of film-making. Each participant took part in the creating and execution of an amateur film (in groups of five or less -- twenty-two films were actually made). Each of the faculty members, as well as the part-time faculty Member (Sister Mary Catharine, who has had much experience in film-making, expecially with Junior High ghetto students) advised the various groups. As is pointed out in the participant evaluation and our own evaluation, this part of the program could have been more advantageously structured and started earlier. Nonetheless, this was one of the most successful aspects of the program.

Finally, during the last week, each of the participants developed his own plan and program for implimenting film education in his educational institution. These schema have been Xeroxed and included as part of our report.

Results

The most immediate result is that the Institute took place. Local newspapermen and businessmen were impressed and excited by the nature of the program and the distinguished visitors. All of the visitors, on the other hand, mentioned that the Institute was one of the most impressive, thorough, and extensive they had seen. Influential but inexperienced educators from fifty different educational institutions had been reached. Of the people taking the course for credit, forty-four curriculum proposals and suggestions were offered. All of the participants were given articles on library-film cooperation, student film-making, short-film bibliographies, distribution

and rental cost lists, cinema-book annotated bibliographies. Almost one hundred films were seen; twenty-one short films were made which could be brought back to their schools; film-directors, scriptwriters, critics, and a psychoanalyst-film-critic were consulted on a open discussion basis.

The long-term results will be more difficult to estimate. One follow-up letter is planned for sending to the participants at the end of the summer to remind them the their hopes for implimenting film-education in their curricula. Subsequent to that letter, a questionaire and more distant-range evaluation will be suggested at the end of the first semester in January or February. Until that time, it will be impossible to determine specific "spin-offs" from the Film Institute.

Note: the different curricula plans as well as varying material given to the participants are all included in our full report package. Please make special note of the final schedule for the Institute in order to see the structure and accomplishments of the actual program itself during the three weeks.

In General, we now have fifty-eight educators in the mid-west and especially the Missouri-Kansas area who have both positions of relative importance in their schools and strategic significance in many of the smaller towns and communities and who are able to impliment film education within the context of the humanities for secondary, higher, and continuing education. For many of them, it has been their first film experience; for all of them, we can be sure, it will not be their last.

Status

All of the participants in the Institute maintained that a program such as this must be continued, and perhaps on two levels: a) a repetition of this same Institute and b) the initiation of a higher level of study and film-making. The second level seems at this time to be out of the question. A repetition

of a similar Institute next summer might well be possible, especially in the light of experience gained as faculty and administrators of the program. People in the film industry have already expressed interest; a group in St. Louis would like to consider such a program there; many who did not attend this summer expressed a desire to do so next year; all of the faculty members were enthusiastic about a repetition of the Institute.

There are two immediate problems. 1) It could not be offered without a grant. This program quite simply would not have been offered without the National Endowment. Moreover, if it could not be offered with the resources, the intensity, and the expanse as it had this summer, the benefits of the institute would be so limited as to be negligible. (Nonetheless, it should be noted that many of the participants said that teachers, upon hearing of the quality of the program, would certainly be willing to pay a tuition for such a course.) 2) The second problem deals with the two administrators. Since the program began immediately after the spring semester, it was an exhausting experience in structuring, planning, budgeting, booking, mailing, and secretarial work. Neither of the directors at the present time feel up to offering the program next summer. It often involved 15-16 hour work-days. Nonetheless, some possibilities suggest themselves:

a) searching for two directors to handle the grant proposal, planning, and administration.
b) having a four-hour-per-day personal secretary for the directors.
c) realizing that a great deal of the time and energy was caused by the fact it was the first time in administration for either of the directors and the first time such an institute was offered. A repetition next year would not approach the difficulty and doubt of the first time.

Personal Evaluation and Suggestion of Changes (an evaluation by the participants is included as an appendix)

Only negative points of evaluation and change are here suggested.

1. Mailing of initial brochures should be mailed as early as possible, at least by late March. The mailing list should also be broader in scope, and an effort should be made to mail the brochures to particular teachers.

2. The grant budget proposal should include $750 - $1000 for film-making. It should also include board and travel expenses for the faculty. Although not necessary, it would be helpful -- especially for small town teachers with families -- to have some stipend or at least travel expense for the participants.

3. Film-making should begin after the first three days. There should be a film-making room for the use of participants in editing, titling, animation, etc. All machinery should be insured (in an itemized policy). A new film-processing company should be used. More editors, cameras and small projectors should be rented (depending upon the size of a grant or the possibility of a laboratory fee).

4. ALL FILMS WHICH ARE RENTED FOR VIEWING SHOULD BE INSURED IN AN ITEMIZED INSURANCE POLICY. We had $3,000.00 worth of film stolen.

5. More film-book publishers should be contacted for displays, and at an earlier date.

6. Perhaps the institute should be four weeks long. This is suggested for better film-making possibilities and greater intimacy among the participants.

7. Although three parties were given for the group, such parties might be offered on campus -- at the cost of the grant-fund and the host-college.

Additional Information

The grant and institute received excellent publicity from the Kansas City Newspapers. (One feature article on Sidney Lumet is included in the folder)

A grant of $750.00 was received from the Missouri Council of the Arts. Although the funds themselves have not arrived as yet, the Council has been most helpful -- especially Sister Mary Catharine as a part time faculty member.

Gifts of private screenings (or reduction rates) were contributed by local Motion Picture Corporations and theater chains.

The Kansas City Public Library was most helpful in planning the programs of short films. A list of some of the films shown is included as an appendix.

Final Statement on the Importance of the Project and brief summary

If one's goal is to enhance and reinforce the humanities on a level that is both broad in perspective and penetrating in depth -- in other words, on a level that will reach into the lives of many people, it will become increasingly evident that one must deal with both the media and the education system at large. Film in particular is a cultural and national force in that it helps mirror national self consciousness and takes part in molding future images of man (especially as exemplified in literature, drama, art, and television). Education and educators must deal with such a cultural phenomenon, and they must have the critical and creative instruments by which they can enlist the potentialities of the film media. Education, as a living organic structure, through teachers and administrators, must learn the language of cinema so as not to fear it, ignore it, or feel compelled to compete with it. Film is a new language; and as such, it is not a competitor. Rather it is an enhancement of man's understanding of and speaking about himself. Such were the theoretical specifics of the goal of "An Institute on Literacy in the Language of Film."

Practically, such goals entailed two necessities: (a) "reading" the language: seeing countless films, discussing them, reading books, speaking with film-makers, thematically analyzing directors and (b) "speaking" the language: the actual making of films, experiencing the group effort of film production, learning the feel of the camera, the lenses, the lighting mechanisms, and discovering the hidden "grammar" of editing, sound tracks, and montage.

The goals and the practical necessities, it seems, were met with considerable success. Fifty-seven educators, who had not had much previous exposure to film, learned film's language -- "reading" it and "speaking" it. They have seen its cultural and national implications; they have become familiarized with it; and they have planned to implement its power in their own educational institutions. If this is indeed the case, the Institute has accomplished much.

Note: After conferring with the faculty members and the Director, the Assistant Director of the Institute made out this report to the National Endowment. Hopefully from these reflections a future article will emerge which could be published in an educational quarterly.

for Rev. Robert R. Lakas S.J.

John Francis Kavanaugh S.J.

signed: John Francis Kavanaugh S.J.

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